

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NIC-01 AID-05 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SCCT-01 TRSE-00 EB-07 /068 W

----- 123298

R 030800Z MAR 75

FM AMCONSUL KARACHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8689

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMCONSUL LAHORE

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PINR, PK

SUBJECT: BALUCHISTAN CALM IN AFTERMATH SHERPAO ASSASSINATION

FOLLOWING RECEIVED FROM CONSUL GENERAL TIGER WHO VISITED QUETTA
AND KALAT 27 FEBRUARY TO 1 MARCH BEFORE CROSSING INTO
AFGHANISTAN ON LEAVE.

SUMMARY: BALUCHISTAN, AS OBSERVED IN RECENT VISIT, SEEMED
SURPRISINGLY CALM IN THE AFTERMATH OF SHERPAO ASSASSINATION AND
SUBSEQUENT GOP ACTIONS. LOCAL RESIDENTS, ALTHOUGH REACTING WITH
INITIAL SHOCK TO ASSASSINATION ITSELF, TOOK BANNING OF NAP AND
DISSOLUTION NWFP GOVERNMENT CALMLY. ALTHOUGH SECURITY
PRECAUTIONS STILL IN EVIDENCE IN GOVERNMENT AREAS QUETTA (AFTER
DARK) AND ON QUETTA-KALAT ROAD, CITY AND MAJOR HILL INSURGENCY
AREAS IN PROVINCE MOSTLY QUIET. LOCAL BUREAUCRACY EXHIBITING
GREAT SATISFACTION OVER SUCCESS IN MAINTENANCE LAW AND ORDER,
PROGRESS IN EXPENDITURE RECORD DEVELOPMENT BUDGET, AND
EFFECTIVE PACIFICATION/WELFARE PROGRAMS IN INSURGENCY AREAS.
END SUMMARY

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1. FIRST VISIT BY CONGEN KARACHI OFFICERS (CONSUL GENERAL AND PAO) TO BALUCHISTAN FOLLOWING SHERPAO ASSASSINATION FOUND PROVINCE, AS OBSERVED FROM QUETTA AND KALAT, SURPRISINGLY CALM AND UNAFFECTED BY THAT EVENT AND ITS AFTERMATH. LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS (INCLUDING GOVERNOR, CHIEF MINISTER, CHIEF SECRETARY, IG POLICE), WHILE NOTING SENSE OF SHOCK IN FIRST FEW DAYS AFTER ASSASSINATION, REPORT THAT THERE WAS NO SIGNIFICANT REACTION TO BANNING OF NAP OR DISSOLUTION NWFP GOVERNMENT. EVEN AS BIASED AN OBSERVER AS AFGHAN CONSUL CONCURRED IN THIS JUDGMENT. GOP SWEEP ON FEBRUARY 20 TO UNCOVER STUDENT ARMS CACHES HAD NO LOCAL IMPACT AS PROVINCE'S MAJOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS WERE CLOSED FOR WINTER VACATIONS.

2. SECURITY PRECAUTIONS IN QUETTA TOWN LIMITED TO CAREFUL SCRUTINY BY FEDERAL SECURITY FORCES OF VEHICLES ENTERING GOVERNMENT OFFICE AND RESIDENCE AREAS AFTER DARK. ROAD SOUTH FROM TOWN COVERED BY EXTENSIVE MILITARY PATROLS AND PICKETS,

ESPECIALLY IN SECTOR BETWEEN LAK PASS, NORTH OF MASTUNG, AND KALAT (22 AND 90 MILES SOUTH OF QUETTA, RESPECTIVELY) AND TRAVEL IN THAT SECTOR BANNED AFTER LATE AFTERNOON. ON 25 FEBRUARY THERE HAD BEEN BOMB BLAST (APPARENTLY HARMLESS) AT QUETTA RAILWAY STATION, SAID TO HAVE BEEN FIRST IN MORE THAN THREE MONTHS. HINTERLAND OF TOWN ALSO REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN FREE OF INCIDENT IN THAT PERIOD. CONSIDERABLE CREDIT GIVEN TO VIGOROUS POLICE ACTION BY IMPRESSIVE INSPECTOR GENERAL ARIF WHO TOOK OVER LAST OCTOBER.

3. CONSENSUS OF ALL OBSERVERS WAS THAT INSURGENCY IN THE TWO MAJOR AREAS (MARRI HILLS AND JHALAWAN) HAD BEEN SUSPENDED SINCE LAST FALL'S MILITARY ACTION, AND MOST DISCOUNTED POSSIBILITY OF MAJOR RESURGENCE OF SUCH ACTIVITY WITH RETURN Milder SPRING WEATHER. SOME PREDICTED MILITARY COULD WITHDRAW GRADUALLY FROM MARRI HILLS, TO BE REPLACED BY POLICE. SITUATION IN JHALAWAN, WHERE NEW THROUGH ROUTE FROM KARACHI TO QUETTA (RCD HIGHWAY) NEARING COMPLETION, SEEMED TO REQUIRE LONGER-TERM MILITARY PRESENCE TO INSURE SECURITY OF THAT IMPORTANT ARTERY.

4. PROVINCIAL BUREAUCRACY CONTINUES TO SHOW SIGNS OF INCREASING EFFICIENCY AND MORALE IN SPITE OF PREVAILINGLY CORRUPT AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INCOMPETENT MINISTRY. OFFICIALDOM AS A WHOLE IS EXHIBITING PRIDE AND SATISFACTION OVER ON-SCHEDULE EXPENDITURE OF THIS YEAR'S RECORD RUPEES 21 CRORE (\$21 MILLION) DEVELOPMENT BUDGET AND PARTICULARLY OVER CLAIMED SUCCESS OF MILITARY WELFARE AND RESETTLEMENT PROJECTS (INCLUDING ROADS, WELLS, SCHOOLS, CLINICS, ETC.) IN MARRI HILLS.

5. COMMENT: EVEN AFTER MAKING LIBERAL ALLOWANCE FOR OFFICIAL

CONCERN TO PROJECT A POSITIVE IMAGE, THE CLAIMS OF CALM, PEACE,
AND PROGRESS HAD A CERTAIN RING OF AUTHENTICITY ON THIS OCCASION.
THE MILD LOCAL REACTION TO THE POLITICAL CRISIS OF EARLY FEBRUARY
IS EXPLAINABLE PARTLY BY THE FACT THAT THE BALUCHISTAN NAP HAD
ALREADY BEEN EFFECTIVELY EMASCULATED BY DETENTION OF ITS MAJOR
LEADERS AND MANY LESSER SUPPORTERS. BUT IT ALSO REFLECTS THE
PERENNIAL DETACHMENT OF THIS VAST AND EMPTY PROVINCE FROM THE
MAINSTREAM OF PAKISTANI POLITICAL LIFE AND EVEN FROM THE
PAROCHIAL CONCERNS OF THE NORTHWEST FRONTIER.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL STABILITY, ASSASSINATION, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: SmithRJ
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975KARACH00368
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750073-0810
From: KARACHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750389/aaaadclp.tel
Line Count: 125
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: SmithRJ
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <29 JUL 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <21 NOV 2003 by SmithRJ>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BALUCHISTAN CALM IN AFTERMATH SHERPAO ASSASSINATION FOLLOWING RECEIVED FROM CONSUL GENERAL TIGER WHO VISITED QUETTA
TAGS: PINT, PINR, PK, (SHERPAO, HAYAT MOHAMMAD KHAN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006